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By Belva Davis.

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Good morning, Commissioners: My name is Belva Davis and I would like to join all the others who have spoken today and thank you for this opportunity to discuss Equal Employment Opportunity in the Broadcasting Industry. In particular I would like to thank Chairman Powell for keeping his word to continue the dialogue on this subject.

I am deeply honored to be part of today's important hearing.

I have worked in major market Broadcasting for almost 35 years. I have worked as a reporter, and as an anchor. I have hosted interview programs and political debates. I guess you could say I've done it all.

At the present time I host a current affairs program for KQED-TV, the public broadcasting station in San Francisco. I am also continuing to work part time as a special projects reporter at KRON TV, where I worked full time for 20 years before my announced retirement just three years ago.

I am also a National Vice-President of AFTRA, the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists and chair of its National EEO Committee.

I have seen tremendous changes in the industry. When I began my career, broadcasting was a totally segregated industry. My first jobs were for Black owned newspapers, and later for White owned radio stations whose programming was targeted to Black audiences.

I speak to you today as one who knows personally what it was like to seek employment in broadcasting before there was a government willing to open the door of opportunity for all

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Americans. I have seen the hugely positive changes after pressure from citizens- through this agency- forced the government to pursue fairness in employment opportunity in this powerful industry.

I believe with all my heart that the electronic mass media is far too critical to democracy to risk returning it to practices of segregation. This is America's signature industry, serving as the mirror through which not only the citizens of this country, but those of the rest of world, form their opinions about who we are as a democratic society.

My three decades in local television have taught me that our immigrants, our international visitors and tourists, and our young people rely on local television as their window on what is good about America. Broadcasters of different color, racial and ethnic backgrounds, bring a richness of culture and experience to the airwaves, and through their reporting share the fascinating mosaic that is this country.

My husband William Moore also recently retired after nearly three decades working as a television news photographer. Just like with me, when he decided to pursue his dream and look for a job in television, there was no road map, and very few examples to show us it could be done.

In those early days, the broadcasting industry and its unions were both closed to us. Thank God the unions gradually changed and have been the gateway to opportunity for thousands of people of color. My union AFTRA has been in the vanguard in helping to open doors for minorities and women.

As part of our collective bargaining agreement AFTRA has been able to achieve mandated meetings to discuss the employment of minorities on daytime television dramas. Using employment numbers kept by show producers, we have been able to track the inclusion of women, minorities, seniors and performers with disabilities and then explore ways to be more inclusive.

While this area of work does not fall under the rules we are discussing, I believe the positive result came from the policy direction of the Commission's EEO rules.

We started down this path in large part because of the interest and power of one man, and his concern about his company's position in the debate over equal employment opportunity.

This man was Jim Cochran...who in the 1960s was a Vice President at Procter and Gamble...at the time, the biggest sponsor of daytime soap operas. Without invitation, and without any of the attendees knowing he was there, he attended a union-sponsored EEO conference in New York. For half a day he patiently listened to speaker after speaker complain of discrimination in the industry. Later he wrote his advertising agency and told it he wanted to see change. He sent us a copy of that letter and change soon followed. Daytime soap operas now look a lot more like "real" Americans.

In the mid 1960's a few good men like Don McGannon, the former president of the Westinghouse Broadcasting Group, also set an example through directives to his general managers to reach out to minorities and women, and let them know they were welcome to apply for jobs at his company. Consequently, in 1965, I was interviewed along with 64 other women of all races for the job I finally landed..

But let me tell you what it was like before EEO put fairness on every manager's mind.

In 1965 I also applied for an open position at the ABC "O&O" in San Francisco, where civil rights leaders were pressuring to hire a person of color. I finally got my interview with Dave Sacks, who at the time was the station manager. I waited more than two hours just to see him, and then this very nice man, who later became my good friend, told me in the politest voice "Thank

you, but we are not hiring Negresses yet...if we ever do I'll certainly keep you in mind."

Those hurtful words relegated me to jungle status and continue to pain me today. They motivate me to continue the fight to make sure we do not slip back into those mindless times when we knew so little about each others we thought that a term like "Negress" was OK.

But that emotional moment was a turning point of sorts. Since then there have been many examples over the years of industry leaders who have lead the way in bringing diverse thoughts and images to the mass media.

Various managers have supported mentoring programs drawing from our local colleges with diverse student populations... minority staff members have been given time off to speak at college conferences and participate in seminars. My station even financially supported a summer scholarship program in my name at a junior high school in a predominately Black neighborhood as a way of reaching students early and letting them know they had a future in Broadcasting if they applied themselves.

Even with these successful programs it was difficult to make sure we didn't slip back into old habits of cronyism or `word of mouth`` recruitment by the still mostly white managers of the stations. The minorities in the newsroom proactively called their friends and colleagues to make sure they, too, knew of open positions.

The most effective outreach programs I've witnessed over the years have had the active support of the top person at the station, and MOST CRITICAL of all... at least one senior manager who personally took on the challenge. So it is particularly important that as you consider new rules that they receive the maximum degree of industry respect and engagement.

As you know, as a result of consolidation many local broadcast operations are growing larger in size. More functions formerly performed by top managers are being delegated to less experienced underlings. Unless the Commission requires involvement of upper management, EEO compliance is at risk of being performed by persons who lack the authority to make decisions, or the skills and mature judgment needed to self-assess and evaluate the program.

Throughout the years there has been heightened interest in the topic of diversity at the time of your Form 395 reports. The release of these numbers served as a reminder as to how we were doing. You see it's very difficult to tell how your team is doing if no one keeps score.

That is why it is so difficult for me to support the broadcast industry's position that it no longer needs the EEO rules...especially when they expect us to believe that- in their words- discrimination no longer exists. It is present in every industry. Even ours.

Let me tell you as an African American woman I know it exists in my life... and I am not alone.

A Washington Post-Kaiser-Harvard study on race relations released in August of 2001 found that the following percentages of racial groups answered "yes" to the question "*Have you ever NOT been hired or promoted for a job because of your race or ethnic background?*"

Whites: 10%
African Americans: 35%
Hispanics: 10%
Asians: 18%
Multi-racial 19%

It seems nobody is exempt from prejudice.

Now let me tell you about a more personal experience with fact and perception.

Not too long ago I was talking with a middle-level manager in my newsroom, advocating as I often do for coverage of local community events..."soft " stories, I admit, but stories of interest I believe to our ethnically diverse viewers. What shocked me was the response of the manager. After a moment of silence, she looked at me and said, "Belva, you are nothing but a well dressed whore".

I say this only to emphasize that our stations have to remain diverse enough so that ideas from all communities are welcomed and someone is always there to advocate for them.

That is why a variety of backgrounds and experiences is so important to this industry. In America we all see some thing slightly different depending on our parents' backgrounds as well as their earning ability and education. When we understand these things, television, in particular, leads us to a deeper understanding of each other.

The television industry is notorious for keeping detailed and accurate records on topics of interest to it. Stations know how every second of the day is used, how many dollars each second brings. They measure the audience...dissecting them into minute groups and surveying their thoughts on everything from consumer items to views on world affairs. Why shouldn't the stations want to know more about the people who work for them??

At KRON, where I am still a part-timer, we have what's called a diversity committee. Our News Director is a woman, who happened to have started as an assistant on the program I once hosted. She attends almost all of these meeting. In addition, all employees are invited to take part in the meetings where story ideas, staff makeup, and goals are discussed. In a business where daily pressures are enormous and just getting though the typical

news day is a challenge, I'm very proud to be part of this organization.

Just this past week, KRON won the RTNDA/UNITY award for the third straight year for its ongoing commitment to covering the cultural diversity of our community. That award from the Radio and Television News Directors Association and Unity-- the minority journalist association-- demonstrates that when a local broadcaster has the interest and dedication, solutions can be found.

That is the basic point we're all talking about today: achieving an employment environment that captures the nuances and understanding of people from various backgrounds and experiences.

My husband Bill and I just returned from a vacation in Europe last night. There, too, the power of the mass media is clearly growing, and taking on what I can only describe as an "American" flair. Previously state-owned television systems with white, male reporters are now showcasing women and people of other ethnic backgrounds. I think managers there watched our open door system, and decided it would work for them, as well.

Let us continue to set an example for the world by encouraging and supporting the EEO rule that will ensure that the images we send -- not only here, but also abroad-- reflect the rich diversity of what this country stands for.

Thank you.